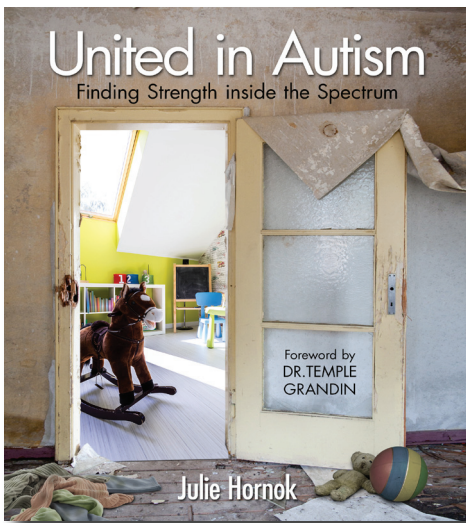


# United in Autism

## Finding Strength Inside the Spectrum

### Author and Activist Julie Hornok Pens *United in Autism: Finding Strength Inside the Spectrum*, and Shares Her Global Perspective



**Dallas, Texas:** Julie Hornok, author and activist, offers a glimpse behind the doors of autism in her new book, *United in Autism: Finding Strength Inside the Spectrum*. This book highlights the stories of thirty incredible families from around the world who are raising children with autism.

“The parents I approached about this book seemed to understand the importance of this work right away,” says Julie. “It was wonderful to have so much support so easily. These families bravely open up and get very personal, revealing a world that is otherwise quite secretive.”

Stepping forward as a global resource in this arena, Julie has used her experiences to mentor others. Through the National Autism Association of North Texas, Julie has spearheaded free Autism Moms Events for the past seven years. The hope these events brought to attendees inspired Julie to do more. *United in Autism: Finding Strength Inside the Spectrum* opened the door to start UnitedInAutism.org and bring free United in Autism Moms Events across the country. United in

Autism joins together with local autism charities to plan and implement events in their cities with the goal of connecting and pampering moms who would otherwise live in isolation.

“Every parent deserves to be brought out of their isolation, to be given hope and to leave with new friends who will walk the rest of their journey with them,” says Hornok.

Julie’s authentic and witty writing has also been published in *Parenting Special Needs Magazine*, *Autism Parenting Magazine*, LiteraryMama.com, AutismSpot.com, *Thrive Magazine*, DFWchild.com, Dallas Moms Blog, YogaDigest.com, *John Brown University Devotional Book*, and various *Chicken Soup for the Soul* Publications.

Wendy Fournier, President of the National Autism Association, shares, “Julie Hornok does an incredible job of curating the real-life stories of these fascinating children and their parents, and this book will undoubtedly open the eyes and hearts of all who read it.”

As a devoted parent of a daughter with autism, Julie Hornok has walked the same challenging road as the families featured in this book. She knows the mental and physical exhaustion and the isolation that comes with autism. Once her daughter began to progress well, Julie decided to pour her newly freed energy into moms walking the same journey.

“I wrote this book because I believe every parent who has heard the words ‘your child has autism’ has a story that encapsulates the human spirit at its worst and at its best,” Julie shares. “We have gone through periods of devastation, determination, and eventually, if we found hope, growth that enabled us to be change makers in the world.”

For more information on the book, *United in Autism: Finding Strength Inside the Spectrum*, please visit [www.JulieHornok.com](http://www.JulieHornok.com), and for more information on events, please visit [UnitedInAutism.org](http://UnitedInAutism.org).

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

When her daughter, Lizzie, was diagnosed with autism at the age of two, **Julie Hornok** jumped into researching and implementing a thirty-hours-a-week home therapy program. This program treated Lizzie's behavior and speech, along with diet and medical interventions to heal her body. A few years later, as her daughter made good progress, Julie went through her videos and began a video blog (LizzieHornok.Blogspot.com) showing Lizzie's progress to encourage others.

As a result of the video blog, Julie became the go-to mom for helping parents with a new autism diagnosis and was honored to accept a position on the board of the National Autism Association of North Texas. She was also asked to blog for AutismSpot. Blogging regularly enabled her to encourage and help thousands across the globe through humorous, heartfelt stories about Lizzie and videos showing the therapies she was using to help her daughter progress.

Through AutismSpot.com, Julie discovered her love for writing. She has published short stories in multiple *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books and received an honorable mention in the memoirs/personal essay category of the eighty-sixth Writer's Digest Annual Writing Competition in 2017. Her work has also appeared in *Parenting Special Needs Magazine*, *Autism Parenting Magazine*, *AutismSpot*, *Thrive Magazine*, *LiteraryMama.com*, and many more.

Julie is passionate about supporting families with autism and lives in Texas with her husband and three children. Connect with her at [JulieHornok.com](http://JulieHornok.com).



Photo courtesy of Carianne Photography

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### Q & A WITH THE AUTHOR

#### What inspired you to write this collection of personal stories?

For the last seven years, through a local autism nonprofit, I have been spearheading a free event to pamper and inspire moms of kids with autism. Every year, we give out a book, but I can never find the perfect book. I wanted a book that showcased strong parents who not only found peace within autism, but used their knowledge to help others. I wanted a book that left these moms inspired to be the best version of themselves in the midst of impossible lifelong circumstances. So, I wrote it.

#### How do you think this book will allow the general public to more fully understand autism?

Each story will showcase a common struggle that parents go through while living with autism. There are so many bizarre things about our lives that happen behind closed doors. We never talk about these things outside our community and the general public won't see it. These families bravely open up and get very personal, revealing a world that is otherwise quite secretive.

#### Why did you decide to compile stories from different families around the world rather than write a book that centers on your child?

I wrote this book because I believe every parent who has heard the words "your child has autism" has a story that encapsulates the human spirit at its worst and at its best. We have gone through periods of devastation, determination, and eventually, if we found hope, growth that enabled us to be change makers in the world. I chose to take the project international because I hoped to prove that, even though we live in different cultures, worship different gods, and have different political views on how the world should be run, we all still are driven first and foremost by the love we have for our children.



Julie Hornok and her daughter, Lizzie  
Photo courtesy of Pala Photography

# United in Autism

## Finding Strength Inside the Spectrum

### Q & A WITH THE AUTHOR

**With this book, what message do you hope to spread to parents who have children with autism or who know a family affected by autism?**

Each of the spotlighted parents in the book allowed themselves to do three things that helped them successfully live through the worst autism has to offer:

- They grieved. It is okay to grieve the child you thought you had and the grief will come in waves as you hit new ages and milestones.
- They reached out for help. It is important to reach out of your isolation and find other families going through the same thing. You are not alone. There are online groups and local groups available to help you.
- They gave back to their communities. Finding a way to give back to others gives your pain purpose and will become more rewarding than you can imagine.

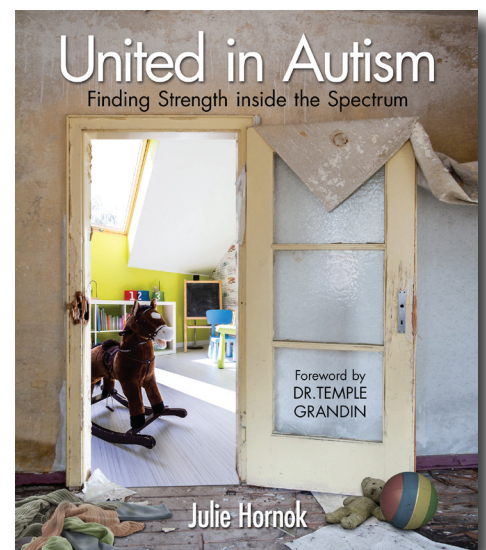
**What advice would you give to new parents whose child/children have just been diagnosed with autism?**

I would love to encourage these parents to keep a marathon mindset. Every child has the capability to progress with the right help, and small steps add up to giant leaps. Work hard to help them function in a way that enables them to live a happier life, but always remember to take joy in your children exactly as they are right now.

**Tell us why you picked this cover design.**

This book is filled with stories, so it is only appropriate that the cover also tells a story that mirrors our lives in three different ways.

- On the outside of the door, you see a home in shambles, but on the inside is a perfectly set-up therapy room. After receiving the diagnosis of autism, every other part of our lives is neglected, and we focus only on helping our child to get better.
- Autism causes our children to be unable to understand the world they are living in (represented by the chaotic world outside the door), but through therapy, things start to make sense, and over time their world is brighter and more enjoyable to live in.
- When receiving an autism diagnosis, a parent's world seems very chaotic. The normal life we once had is now out of reach. Our hopes and dreams for our child are crushed with one single sentence, but through finding a community, we are able to walk through a door that brings a new type of life that can be just as rewarding.



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### Q & A WITH THE AUTHOR

#### What do you say to parents of autistic children who may feel alone?

Quite simply, you are not alone. No matter how bad it is, and sometimes it is unimaginably bad, someone else has gone through this. Reach out to a local autism nonprofit or search for an online Facebook group. Not only will you find brilliant parents who will help you problem solve, you will also find lifelong friends who will be there for you through it all.

#### Tell us about your United in Autism events.

We provide free nights out for parents of children with autism that include food, entertainment, inspiration, and prizes. The mission is to get parents out of their isolation, to help them meet others going through the same thing, and to give them a break from their real life for an evening. Living with autism is intense, and it is encouraging how even a short break can recharge their spirits and give them the hope and strength to step back in the fight.

#### With your life as a wife, mother, author, and activist, how do you find time for yourself?

It is human nature to make excuses, but the truth is, each of us has the ability to make the time for what we find important. I make hot yoga a priority in my life. I am a better wife, mother, author, and activist if I make some time to take instead of only giving.



*“Life is messy and perfection is unattainable. Finding a way to work calmly within the chaos is key.”*

**—Julie Hornok**

#### What role does faith play in your life and work?

My faith runs through my life like a thread through a garment. I am far from perfect. I see my own faults every day. I rely on God to give me the strength to be who I need to be and to do what I need to do.

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## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

*“United in Autism: Finding Strength Inside the Spectrum offers a look into the lives of families around the globe sharing the experience of living with autism. Julie Hornok does an incredible job of curating the real-life stories of these fascinating children and their parents, and this book will undoubtedly open the eyes and hearts of all who read it.”*

**Wendy Fournier**

President at National Autism Association

*“Julie Hornok knows how to draw readers in, capture their hearts, and leave them inspired. I have had the privilege of publishing Julie’s work in the autism community for many years and have witnessed the incredible difference her articles and blogs have made in the lives of thousands of families in more than 180 countries. Julie writes with a depth of honesty and passion that is hard to come by.”*

**Kent Potter**

Founder and CEO of AutismSpot

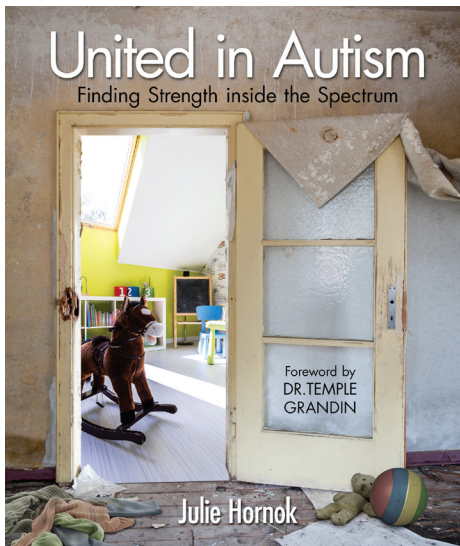
*“Wise, authentic, and knowledgeable can hardly describe this beautiful book. To “listen” to parents from around the world describe their children, the conditions and attitudes toward autism in their countries and their actions to improve lives is breathtaking. To better understand the inner world of an autistic child brings the reader to action in the outer world. Whether you have an autistic child or not, this author’s work is motivating. Readers will thank Julie Hornok for bringing forth the voice of silence.”*

**Jackie Waldman**

Author, “The Courage to Give” series

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## Finding Strength Inside the Spectrum



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### SYNOPSIS

This compilation of some thirty stories from around the world offers a helping hand to parents who feel alone and without hope in raising a child with autism. An isolating disorder, autism can take a huge emotional toll on the loved ones who care for someone on the spectrum, as well as on the individual who is diagnosed. *United in Autism* allows readers to recognize their allies in this fight, and that they are not as alone as they might feel.